1985

A phylokaryotypic evaluation of the genus Tursiops (family Delphinidae)

Melissa Kay Estes
Portland State University

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.5324>

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Melissa Kay Estes for the Master of Science
in Biology presented May 1, 1985.

Title: A Phylokaryotypic Analysis of the Genus Tursiops (Family
Delphinidae)

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

~~Lester J. Newman, Chairperson~~

Deborah Duffield

Richard Forbes

Marc Feldesman

There is considerable controversy over the number and distribution
of species in the genus Tursiops (Odontoceti: Delphinidae).

In an attempt to correlate genetic data with possible species
delineation, this study investigates the presence of chromosomal
variants between the North Atlantic bottle nose dolphin, Tursiops
truncatus, and the North Pacific bottle nose dolphin, T. gilli. Blood

samples were obtained from oceanaria in the United States. Location of capture was correlated with karyotype to compare chromosome morphology with geographic range.

The samples of whole blood were added to culture media and incubated for four days, then treated with Colcemid to collect a number of cells undergoing mitosis. Metaphase cells were harvested and mounted on glass slides. For standard karyotyping the slides were stained with Giemsa. A C-banding technique was used to examine heterochromatin distribution by pretreatment of the slides with an alkaline solution and then staining with Giemsa.

Cells from each animal were examined by microscope and photographed. Karyotypes were constructed from the photographic prints, and chromosome morphology and banding patterns were compared.

There was considerable variation in C-banding among the Tursiops examined. There were no clear distinctions between the Atlantic and Pacific forms, nor between coastal versus offshore captive sites.

The results indicated that Tursiops populations exhibit a great deal of chromosomal polymorphism in the form of C-band heterochromatin variability.

A PHYLOKARYOTYPIC EVALUATION OF THE GENUS
TURSIOPS (FAMILY DELPHINIDAE)

by
MELISSA KAY ESTES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

BIOLOGY

Portland State University

1985

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of

Melissa Kay Estes presented June 15, 1985.

[REDACTED]
Lester J. Newman, Chairperson

[REDACTED]
Deborah Duffield

[REDACTED]
Richard Forbes

[REDACTED]
Marc Feldesman

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]
W.H. Taylor, Head, Department of Biology

[REDACTED]
Jim ~~Heath~~ Heath, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
III. MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	9
Collection Techniques.....	9
Culture Techniques.....	9
Chromosome Techniques.....	9
Chromosome Staining Techniques.....	10
IV. RESULTS.....	11
V. DISCUSSION.....	21
REFERENCES.....	26

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. SITE OF CAPTURE.....	3
II. CHROMOSOME DISTRIBUTION OF C-BANDS.....	20

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Standard karyotype of <u>Tursiops truncatus</u>	12
2. Standard karyotype of <u>Tursiops truncatus gilli</u>	13
3. C-banded karyotype of <u>Tursiops truncatus</u>	15
4. C-banded karyotype of <u>Tursiops truncatus gilli</u>	16
5. C-band chromosome variants.....	17

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is considerable controversy over the number of existing species in the genus Tursiops (Odontoceti: Delphinidae). Hershkovitz (1966) delineates two species, Tursiops truncatus and T. gilli. Two recognized subspecies of T. truncatus are based on geographical distinctions--T. t. aduncus Ehrenberg 1873, in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, South Pacific Ocean and South Atlantic Ocean, and T. t. truncatus Montagu 1921, in the North Atlantic Ocean. T. gilli Dall 1873, occurs in the North Pacific Ocean. Hershkovitz admits that there may be some overlapping of T. t. aduncus with T. gilli off the coast of Baja California and southern Mexico, and urges a taxonomic revision of this genus. Walker (1975) distinguishes an inshore and offshore form of T. gilli off southern California and Baja California which may correlate with Hershkovitz's (1966) overlapping of T. t. aduncus with T. gilli. Walker (1975) identifies two forms of T. gilli based on cranial measurements, feeding habits and behavior but has not documented these distinctions. Mitchell (1975) designates inshore and offshore forms of T. truncatus based on observed size differences but speculates that these may be subspecies of T. truncatus; this could correlate with Hershkovitz's idea that T. t. aduncus of the South Atlantic overlaps with T. t. truncatus of the North Atlantic. Recently the U. S. Marine Mammal Commission (1976) assimilated all species of the genus Tursiops

truncatus with worldwide distribution. This is in agreement with Rice (1977).

By examining chromosomes to compare variations in structure between closely related species and races, cytogeneticists have documented that certain types of chromosomal rearrangements can create genetic isolating mechanisms leading to speciation (White, 1973).

In an attempt to correlate chromosomal data with possible species delineation, this study investigates the presence of chromosomal variants between the North Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, T. truncatus, and the North Pacific bottlenose dolphin, T. t. gilli. Blood samples from the two forms were available from oceanaria in the United States. Location of capture of each animal sampled (Table I) was correlated with karyotype to enable comparison of chromosome morphology with geographic range.

TABLE I
SITE OF CAPTURE

T. truncatus

023	Mississippi coast (Gulf of Mexico)
029	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
031	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
033	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
034	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
035	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
708	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
722	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)
801	Titusville, Fl. (Atlantic Ocean)

T. t. gilli

017	San Diego, Ca. (Pacific Coast)
127	Puerto Citos, Mexico (Pacific Coast)
811	Catalina, Ca. (Pacific Ocean)
812	Catalina, Ca. (Pacific Ocean)
813	Catalina, Ca. (Pacific Ocean)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heitz (1928) differentiated between darkly-staining portions of the chromosome which remained condensed throughout mitosis and the lighter stained regions which decondensed at the end of mitosis. He called the permanently condensed regions heterochromatin. Brown (1966) recognized two types of heterochromatin---facultative and constitutive. Facultative heterochromatin may contain structural genes (Littau, et al, 1964), but they are inactivated as in the Barr body of female mammalian cells (Barr and Bertram, 1949; Ohno, et al, 1959, 1961; Lyon, 1967) and the entire paternal haploid set of chromosomes in the male mealy bug, Planococcus citri (Nur, 1966; White, 1973). Constitutive heterochromatin is presumed inactive in transcribing gene products (Hsu, 1962; and Brown, 1966), and is associated with specific regions of the chromosome. It has been found adjacent to the centromere (Ohno, et al, 1959; Swanson, 1957). Ferguson-Smith and Handmaker (1963) found constitutive heterochromatin adjacent to secondary constrictions. Hsu (1963), as well as Hsu and Arrighi (1971) and Arrighi and Hsu (1971), localized constitutive heterochromatin at the telomeres. Lee and Yunis (1971a,b) and Arrighi and Hsu (1971) localized constitutive heterochromatin interstitially within the length of the chromosome.

Pardue and Gall (1970) developed a technique for staining heterochromatin in Mus musculus by treatment of metaphase cells on

slides with alkali (0.07 NaOH) followed by staining with Giemsa. This procedure was modified by Arrighi and Hsu (1971) and Yunis, et al (1971) for use on human cells, and reveals a characteristic dense staining of constitutive heterochromatin (Comings and Mattochia, 1972). These darkly-staining areas are called C-bands. Comings (1977) showed that C-band heterochromatin is a DNA-nuclear matrix protein complex which is resistant to extraction with the various alkalis used prior to Giemsa staining. This protein complex occurs preferentially in constitutive heterochromatin, possibly because the heterochromatin is more condensed or because the protein complex is more intimately bound to DNA (Comings, 1978).

In many species C-band constitutive heterochromatin is primarily composed of highly repetitious satellite DNA (Yunis, et al, 1971; Schedl, 1971; Jones, 1977; Comings, 1978) although a small portion of constitutive heterochromatin does not contain repetitious DNA (Comings and Mattochia, 1972; Arrighi, et al, 1974). Satellite DNAs are DNAs of different buoyant densities than the main bulk of DNA when separated by high speed gradient ultracentrifugation (Kit, 1961). They are composed of short, highly repetitive base sequences (Britten and Kohne, 1968) and have been localized to constitutive heterochromatin in Mus musculus (Jones, 1970; Pardue and Gall, 1970), Microtus agrestis (Arrighi, et al, 1970; Lee and Yunis, 1971a,b), Cavia porcellus (Yunis and Yasmineh, 1970), Peromyscus spp. (Pathak, et al, 1973) and humans (Arrighi and Hsu, 1971; Saunders, et al, 1972; Craig-Holmes, et al, 1973; Gosden, et al, 1977). Because of their highly repetitive base sequences, satellite

DNAs are not believed to code for any gene products, but are considered important in functioning to maintain the structure of the chromosome (Arrighi and Hsu, 1971; White, 1973).

Intraspecific variations in heterochromatin have been documented in the guinea pig, Cavia porcellus (Bianchi and Ayres, 1971; Southern, 1970), the jungle hamster, Phodopus sungorous (Radzhabli, 1977), the North American white footed mouse, Peromyscus boylii (Lee, et al, 1972), the North American deer mouse, Peromyscus maniculatus (Pathak, et al, 1973), the crab-eating macaque, Macaca fascicularis (Dutrillaux, et al, 1979), and humans (Pearson, et al, 1973; Craig-Holmes, et al, 1973; and Sekhon and Sly, 1975). Interspecific comparisons between closely related species of the same genus have revealed close karyotypic agreement by G-banding with great variations in amount and location of C-band heterochromatin (Pathak, et al, 1973; Sasaki, et al, 1975; Craig Holmes, et al, 1973; Radzhabli, 1977; Dutrillaux, et al, 1979). Additional comparisons between related species not of the same genus have revealed similar homologies in G-banding with karyotypic variation attributable exclusively to C-band heterochromatin differences (Stock and Hsu, 1973; Dutrillaux, et al, 1978).

Apparently intraspecific and interspecific variations in C-band heterochromatin are ubiquitous in animal species and therefore are not considered a valid criterion for establishing taxonomic relationships. Stock and Hsu (1973), however, speculated that species polymorphisms, presumably including heteromorphism in heterochromatin, may be valuable in revealing molecular evolution and speciation. They theorized that differences in the karyotype of the African green monkey (Cercopithecus

aethiops) and the Rhesus macaque (Macaca mulatta) are explained by the deletion of C-band heterochromatin from the C. aethiops karyotype giving rise to the M. mulatta karyotype.

Although the function of heterochromatin in the genome has not been clearly outlined, Nankivell (1976) and Miklos and Nankivell (1976), observed that in the grasshopper genus Atractomorpha, chiasmata (leading to crossing over between homologous pairs) occur at a maximal distance from heterochromatin present in the chromosome. Thus, there appears to be a suppression of crossing over near heterochromatic regions of the chromosome and an interference with crossing over between homologs (Thomas and Kaltsikes, 1974). This suppression and interference is hypothesized to stabilize the genes adjacent to the heterochromatin and to cause these genes to be transmitted more frequently as a linkage group (Jones, 1977). However, Hansmann (1976) has documented an increased incidence of translocations between chromosomes containing satellite DNA heterochromatin.

It has been proposed that variations in C-bands within a species reflect alterations in the structure and distribution of repetitive DNA (Jones, 1977; Miller, 1977). The rapid expansion of repetitive heterochromatin from changes in small base sequences---"saltatory replication" (Britten and Kohne, 1968)---can occur during the evolution of a given species and perhaps during the lifetime of a given individual (Bianchi and Ayres, 1971).

Mayr (1982) stated that the process of speciation, which is the production of new daughter species (Mayr, 1942), can be traced back to intraspecific variation, starting with minute changes. "Any genetic

reconstruction of a sexually reproducing population starts with the change of a single chromosome and has to pass through a stage of polymorphism or heterozygosity" (Mayr, 1982).

My study was an investigation of C-band constitutive heterochromatin in two possibly distinct types of bottlenose dolphins of the genus Tursiops, T. truncatus and T. t. gilli, to determine the amount of intraspecific variation in heterochromatin, and thus potentially in repetitive DNA which occurs in these animals. Standard karyotypes were established for each group, then C-banding was performed to document constitutive heterochromatin variants in these animals, in an effort to analyze the potential for speciation in these two groups.

CHAPTER III

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection Techniques. Blood was obtained by venipuncture of superficial vessels in the fluke of captive T. truncatus and T. t. gilli held at Sea World Florida and Sea World San Diego. Blood was drawn by Sea World employees into heparinized vacutainers and kept refrigerated until cultured.

Culture Techniques. Approximately 1 ml of whole blood was added to culture media consisting of 5 ml RPMI 1640 (Gibco) supplemented with 25% fetal calf serum (Colorado Serum Company, 25ml/100 ml media), penicillin (0.04 ml/100 ml media), streptomycin (0.05 ml/100 ml media), and phytohemagglutinin (PHA-M, Burroughs-Wellcome reconstituted, 1.8 ml/125 ml supplemented media). Cultures were incubated for four days at 37°C in 5% CO₂.

Chromosome Techniques. Colcemid (0.05 ml Gibco, 10 meq/ml) was added 2 1/2 hr before harvest, then removed by centrifugation after 1-2 hr. Fresh culture media was added to the cells. Colcemid was added again for 10 min immediately prior to harvest. Metaphase cells were collected by centrifugation, and treated by addition of either of two hypotonic solutions: 0.075M KCl for 4 1/2 min; or 1:1 KCl to 20% fetal calf serum for 12 min. Cells fixed in the first hypotonic proved better for

banding; while the latter hypotonic was better for standard staining. Cells were fixed in a 3:1 solution of ethyl alcohol and glacial acetic acid for 20 min. Fixative was changed and cells were stored at 0-4°C.

Chromosome Staining Techniques. Slides from twelve T. truncatus and seven T. t. gilli were examined for metaphase chromosome spreads. C-banding studies were conducted to delineate polymorphisms. Air-dried and flame-dried slides were prepared from both hypotonic solutions; only air-dried slides were used for C-banding. Slides were stained according to the following techniques:

1. Standard stain---Giemsa (Fisher) 1-50 ml distilled water for 5-7 min.
2. C-banding---staining of constitutive heterochromatin by immersion of slides in 0.2N HCl, treatment with 0.07N NaOH and 2 x SSC (0.3M sodium chloride in 0.03M trisodium citrate), rinsed in 70% ethyl alcohol and 95% ethyl alcohol and incubated in a moist chamber of 2 x SSC at 65°C for 12-16 hr. Slides were rinsed again in 70% ethyl alcohol and 95% ethyl alcohol then stained in a 4% solution of Giemsa in distilled water at pH 6.8 for 7-10 min.

A minimum of five metaphase cells were examined from each animal with each staining technique. Cells were photographed with a Zeiss camera mounted on an American Optical Series microscope. Kodak S0-115 film was developed with Kodak D-19 developer and prints were made on Kodabromide paper.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Standard karyotypes were constructed using Giemsa stain. Twelve T. truncatus and seven T. t. gilli were selected for study with banding techniques based on the quality and quantity of metaphase spreads. Nine T. truncatus and five T. t. gilli were successfully C-banded.

In studies by Arnason (1974) and Duffield (1977) the overall homology of the chromosome pairs in T. truncatus and T. t. gilli was established by G-banding. In Tursiops, C-bands appear primarily in chromosomes which can be identified even by standard staining based on centromere position and relative size of the chromosome. By these latter criteria, the 22 chromosome pairs of Tursiops can be arranged for convenience of comparison into four groups of autosomes and the sex chromosomes (Duffield, 1977) (Figures 1 and 2):

- Group A: five largest pairs; first two distinctly larger than the other three pairs; distinguishable from each other by relative arm length; third pair intermediate in size; last two pairs shorter and distinguishable from each other by arm length
- Group B: five pairs of submetacentric chromosomes; in descending order by size; first two pairs distinctly larger than last three pairs.
- Group C: six pairs of metacentric chromosomes; first two to three pairs larger than the last three to four pairs.
- Group D: five pairs of acrocentric chromosomes.

Figure 1. Standard karyotype of Tursiops truncatus.

Figure 2. Standard karyotype of Tursiops truncatus gilli.

Sex Chromosomes: X similar in size to the first two Group B and first Group C chromosome pairs but centromere intermediate in position between submetacentric and metacentric ; Y punctiform.

Group A chromosomes were easily distinguished by their size. The first two Group B chromosome pairs were also easily distinguished by their obvious submetacentric centromere correlated with larger size. The remaining Group B chromosomes were occasionally hard to distinguish with certainty as were the Group C chromosomes. Group D chromosomes were easily distinguished as acrocentrics but could not always be clearly arranged in order of descending size. They were evaluated as a group. The X chromosomes were distinguished by the position of the centromere, while the punctiform Y was clearly distinct.

These animals exhibited interstitial and terminal as well as centromeric C-bands (Figures 3 and 4).

All animals had a centromeric and an interstitial C-band on the q arm of chromosome number one (Figure 5). Seven T. truncatus and two T. t. gilli had a terminal band on the p arm in addition to the other two bands. The other two T. truncatus and three T. t. gilli were heteromorphic for the p terminal band (one homolog of each chromosome pair exhibited the band while the other homolog did not, or had very little terminal band, which was undetectable in these preparations).

All 14 animals had both a p terminal and a q interstitial band on chromosome number two, with no centromeric C-band.

All animals had a q interstitial band on chromosome number three; additionally, four T. truncatus and three T. t. gilli had a p terminal

Figure 3. C-banded karyotype of Tursiops truncatus.

Figure 4. C-banded karyotype of Tursiops truncatus gilli.

Number 1 Number 2 Number 3 Number 4 Number 5 Number 6 Number 7 Acros Figure 5. C-band chromosome variants.

band, while the remaining animals were heteromorphic for this band, as with chromosome one.

All animals had a large centromeric C-band and a p terminal band on chromosome number four.

Chromosome number five exhibited great variability: seven T. truncatus and three T. t. gilli had a p terminal band while two T. truncatus and one T. t. gilli were heteromorphic for this band. One T. t. gilli had no p terminal band in either homolog. Seven T. truncatus and all five T. t. gilli had a q interstitial band while the remaining two T. truncatus showed no evidence of a q interstitial band on either homolog.

All animals had both a p terminal and a centromeric C-band on chromosome number six.

All animals had a centromeric C-band on chromosome number seven; four T. truncatus and one T. t. gilli also had p terminal C-band. Five T. truncatus and three T. t. gilli had no p terminal band on either homolog. Poor visibility in all cells studied made it impossible to determine the presence or absence of this band in one T. t. gilli.

The five acrocentrics were arranged in descending order by size, but due to uncertainty about their exact order, they were evaluated as a group in each animal.

Seven T. truncatus and two T. t. gilli had four acrocentric chromosomes with a centromeric C-band. The other animals, two T. truncatus and three T. t. gilli, had three acrocentrics with a centromeric C-band.

Two T. truncatus had three acrocentrics with an additional interstitial C-band, while seven T. truncatus and all five T. t. gilli had two acrocentrics with an interstitial C-band in addition to the centromeric band.

Homologs were paired by size and relative centromere position, not by G-band homology. G-banding was attempted in this study but was not successful.

Care was taken during analysis of the heteromorphisms to distinguish dissimilarities owing to population or individual variants and dissimilarities owing to differential condensation of metaphase cells and variable quality of preparation.

There was much C-band variation within Tursiops, and no clear distinctions between the Atlantic and Pacific forms nor between inshore and offshore forms (Table II).

Considering the small sample size, the amount of variation among animals is significant. Only one animal, T. t. gilli 812, did not exhibit a heteromorphism on any chromosome.

The coastal T. truncatus, 023, displayed more variability than any other animal, followed by coastal T. t. gilli, 017. The other coastal T. t. gilli, 127, displayed the same amount of variation (1) as the majority of both T. truncatus and T. t. gilli.

CHROMOSOME DISTRIBUTION OF C-BANDS

* Unable to determine presence
due to poor visibility in
all cells examined

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study reveals great variation in quantity of C-band heterochromatin in both T. truncatus and T. t. gilli. Walen and Madin (1965) and Duffield, et al (1967) documented a size heteromorphism in the second-largest chromosome pair in their T. truncatus karyotypes which is consistent with my observations in the largest pair. Allowing for the arbitrary assignment of chromosome number to these two pairs, the studies are in agreement and this apparent size heteromorphism is attributable to C-band heterochromatin.

Several size heteromorphisms correlated to C-band constitutive heterochromatin are apparent in the T. t. gilli karyotype presented by Arnason (1974) and in the T. t. gilli and T. truncatus karyotypes presented by Duffield (1977).

The large amount of variation in heterochromatin within this small sample of Tursiops suggests that these animals may be forming cytological races capable of undergoing speciation. According to Stock and Hsu (1973), species polymorphisms including heteromorphisms in heterochromatin may indicate the presence of incipient races leading to speciation. White (1973) stated that cytogenetic evidence seems to suggest that chromosomal rearrangements play a direct causative role in speciation in some groups of animals.

Prior to the development of chromosome banding techniques

evolutionists argued that animal speciation could only occur allopatrically---i.e., part of a population becomes geographically separated from the main population, acquires reproductive isolation, then evolves independently from the original population to develop into a different species (Mayr, 1963).

Sympatric speciation was formulated as an alternative---that stable polymorphisms can become established within a population not geographically isolated, and these polymorphisms can cause a gradual divergence genetically from the main population until a distinct species is produced (Maynard-Smith, 1966). Stasipatric speciation was theorized by White (1968) as a modification of sympatric speciation. In stasipatric speciation, an isolating mechanism such as a chromosome rearrangement can spread throughout the range of an existing species creating cytological races which are the source of incipient species. White (1973) also suggested that all of the geographical races capable of evolving into distinct species are chromosomal races.

Simpson (1967) argued that opportunities for evolution require the existence of genetic variability which can cause genetic combinations to produce new types of individuals that are then subject to natural selection.

Dutrillaux, et al (1979), theorized that the presence of variable heterochromatic segments within a species increases the possibility for a chromosome to undergo change and fulfills the requirement for genetic variability necessary for speciation.

In many populations, chromosomal variation is found to be vast relative to the morphological diversity and genetic distance in these

populations (Marks, 1983). The present study suggests that the presence of C-band heteromorphisms and polymorphisms within the Tursiops provides the potential for chromosomal variability necessary for speciation.

Arnason (1972) argued that observed karyotypic stability within the Cetacea is due to outbreeding as a result of high mobility in the environment with far-ranging individuals and large breeding groups. For Tursiops, however, there is little evidence that they range over a large area with a great deal of outbreeding. Observations of Tursiops populations under natural conditions suggest that their population structure involves the occupation of distinct home ranges (True, 1891; Caldwell, 1955; Mead, 1975; Wursig and Wursig, 1977) with seasonal migrations due to mating and calving seasons or food fluctuations (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1972; Odell, 1975).

In the Tursiops population observed by Wursig (1978) in the South Pacific, core groups of several adults and one or two calves were seen together consistently in a given home range. Wursig speculated that these small groups may represent breeding populations of related animals, however Wursig did observe some far-ranging individuals that may have reproduced between breeding groups. Gunter (1942) also consistently observed small groups of five to ten related animals in the Gulf of Mexico with no observed population fluctuations.

If Tursiops do form breeding units of five to ten related animals with a few far-ranging individuals, then it is possible for these breeding units to become reproductively isolated from each other.

In the sei whale, Balenopterus borealis, Arnason, et al (1978) observed C-band heteromorphisms and conjectured that this variability could generate genic polymorphisms within a species which would then predispose speciation.

Mayr (1954) analyzed the genetic effects of isolating a small group from the main population and stated that the resulting changes may have the character of a "genetic revolution" leading to speciation. A C-band study in 45 species of hyliid frogs of the genus Litoria (King, 1980), documented that these animals had undergone considerable internal karyotypic modification leading to speciation via heterochromatic rearrangements. This is in agreement with Mayr's (1982) observation that any genetic reconstruction has to pass through a stage of heterozygosity or polymorphism.

If a species in the phylogenetic sense is "the largest aggregate of individual organisms that evolve as a unit" Wiley (1978), then the breeding units observed in Tursiops may be fulfilling the requirement for speciation by being reproductively isolated and by displaying heterozygosity in heterochromatin distribution.

On the other hand, if Tursiops populations are composed of breeding units with a few far-ranging individuals which may be outbreeding with other groups, then there may be great variation in C-band heterochromatin between breeding units but not among individuals within a breeding unit.

My study is a preliminary investigation to analyze the presence of variants within different populations of Tursiops. My results indicate that Tursiops populations exhibit a great deal of genetic

polymorphism as evidenced by C-band heterochromatin variability, which suggests that Tursiops has the potential to form cytological races leading to speciation.

Due to the small sample size in this study and the lack of knowledge about Tursiops population structure, it was not possible to determine if the heterochromatin variability occurs among individual animals or between breeding units. Additional studies of population structure and heterochromatin variability may reveal the existence of cytological races within the Tursiops that are capable of undergoing speciation.

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